THE SAMSON, KENNEDY & CO. FAILURE.

NOT for years has so much discussion taken place over a business collapse in Canada as has resulted from the failure of Samson, Kennedy & Co. in Toronto last month. This is due to several causes: First, the failure was one of considerable magnitude; secondly, the head of the firm is well-known throughout the country both from his high official position and his career as a merchant; and, lastly, from the business methods which brought the house to its end.

THE REVIEW shares in the sympathy which is undoubtedly felt for Mayor Kennedy personally in the trying circumstances through which, at his age after achieving success in life, he is now compelled to pass. But THE REVIEW would be wanting in its duty to the trade if it were too cowardly to say what the situation demands, namely, that Samson, Kennedy & Co. collapsed largely on account of their own mistaken methods, not through any sudden financial stringency (such as might overtake any firm), and not from general depression in trade. Goods were being sold at prices too low to ensure reasonable profit, so that the failure was bound to come, and ought to have been foreseen by the firm. Such a basis on which to do business is utterly unsound. Large capital, exceptional nerve, and an immense turnover might stave off disaster for long, perhaps forever. But, speaking, generally an adequate profit is necessary to do a straight sound, business, and whenever a firm departs from the healthy principles that prevail in the best commercial quarters, failure inevitably results. The career of a house like this is bad for trade all round. It is not fair to other houses which try to do business on legitimate lines, and which suffer heavy losses by reckless trading. A bad example is offered both to the retail and wholesale trade by any organized attempt to set the plain rules of sound business at defiance. The firm's failure, therefore, must be taken as a solemn warning to all who think they can evade shipwreck by neglecting the elementary principle of adequate profit.

Sympathy will be felt for the English creditors, who sold largely in the knowledge that the head of the firm enjoyed a high reputation, and who were not so well posted about conditions as those nearer home. For the largest Canadian creditors, especially the agents of the mills, we cannot find that sympathy is expressed. In fact, the trade seems rather pleased at the losses made. It has transpired since the failure that the mills were warned that Canadian goods were being sold at too low figures, and that it would be better for trade all round if encouragement to continue this were stopped. It was distinctly pointed out to the agents that other houses, large patrons of the mills, were injuriously affected by the firm's course. The mills turned a deaf ear. It is said on their behalf that Samson, Kennedy & Co. were believed to be a safe risk, that they bought largely, and were not the only people who dealt on too narrow a margin of profit. Be this as it may, THE REVIEW believes that the profit on Canadian goods would be better maintained if the agents of the mills avoided bolstering up any firm which sold too low. It is impossible to help Canadian goods if the makers of these goods are at no trouble to maintain fair prices.

THE DIRTY BILL NUISANCE.

The remarks of THE REVIEW, in its last issue, about the dirty bank bills and defaced silver coins of our currency, has drawn forth a number of comments. Says The Toronto Globe: "As THE REVIEW says, we cannot expect the evil to be remedied by trades refusing to accept the currency; the merchant is too glad to get money of any kind. But the banks and the Dominion officials might do more in the way of the speedy destruction of worn notes. The appearance of some of the Dominion notes in circulation would indicate a belief that the bit of paper possessed some intrinsic value, and that its destruction would be a national loss, a calamity to be averted as long as possible. We don't know exactly how much it costs the country to manufacture a note, but it is not enough to offset the danger of allowing filthy and diseased bills to circulate."

MYOPIA OR SHORT-SIGHTEDNESS.

Dr. G. Sterling Ryerson, the well-known eye specialist and professor in Trinity Medical College, had an article in The Lancet, which has been reproduced in the leading papers and magazines in the States. It is specially interesting to business men and commercial travelers. He says:

"Myopia being essentially a condition due to abuse of the eye, one is constantly obliged to say 'don't' to patients. It occurs to me that it might be useful to put these prohibitory rules in aphoristic form:

"(1) Don't read in railway trains or in vehicles in motion. (2) Don't read lying down or in a constrained position. (3) Don't read by firelight, moonlight or twilight. (4) Don't read by a flickering gaslight or candlelight. (5) Don't read books printed on thin paper. (6) Don't read books which have no space between the lines. (7) Don't read for more than fifty minutes without stopping, whether the eyes are tired or not. (8) Don't hold the reading close to the eyes.

"It would almost seem as though some of these rules were too obvious to require mention, but practical experience shows that myopes abuse their eyes just in the ways stated. Reading by firelight or by moonlight are favorite sins. Reading lying down tends to increase the strain on the accommodation, and reading while traveling tires the ciliary muscle because of the too frequent adjustment of focus. In short, anything which tends to increase the quantity of blood in the organ favors the increase of the defect, leading in extreme cases to detachment of the retina and blindness."

WAR PRICES.

A highly interesting document was shown to THE REVIEW the other day, giving the prices of manufactured cottons in the United States thirty years ago. The difference in the quotations of that date compared with those of to-day is striking. The document was a printed sheet of Claflin's prices, dated August 27, 1864, and of course two causes have been at work to diminish prices since. The first is that 1864 was a war year, when values were inflated. The second is the fall of prices of manufactured cottons all over the world owing to improved methods of manufacture and increased competition. Still the difference is remarkable. Selecting a few lines and comparing them with Canadian prices to-day, the drop will be seen. For instance: ticks in August, 1864, were quoted at 30 to 62½ cents, against 7½ to 16 cents now; canton flannel ranged from 44 to 75 cents, against 5½ to 12½ to-day; denims were from 40 to 70 cents, compared with 8 to 16 now; brown sheetings ranged from 45 to 72½ cents, against 3½ to 8 now; bleached cottons were quoted at 43½ to 74 cents, against 4½ to 11½ at present, and bleached sheetings from 65 cents to $1.60, against 15 to 25 cents now. It is not likely the United States will ever see such prices again